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Easy rider is bike of future

SUNDAY STAR TIMES , A ed, colC, p14

25 FEB 1996

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TEXT:

A FUTURISTIC motorbike unveiled at an exhibition in Italy relies on batteries that have yet to be built -- but it highlights how motorbikes are ripe for innovations that are already transforming the car.

Its battery-powered propulsion system is operated by a smartcard. A rear-view camera replaces the mirror. An electronic distance sensor keeps the motorbike at a safe distance from other vehicles. It also has satellite navigation and a CD player.

The concept bike, called Aspire, has been made by the Sanyang Motor Company of Taiwan, which sells about one million motorbikes a year.

Powered by batteries, the machine is switched on by a smartcard -- there are no keys and no mechanical lock. The rear-view mirror is a miniature wide-angle camera mounted at the back of the bike. The images it captures are relayed to a screen built into the handlebars in a position that is easier for the rider to view.

A second screen is used for displaying digitised maps of the local road network. The bike carries a Global Positioning System (GPS) which pinpoints its location to within a few metres.

The Aspire also uses electronic vehicle sensing. This is radar-like equipment which calculates the distance between vehicles. It can be linked, via an on-board computer, to a speed governor that activates the brakes and the throttle to keep vehicles at a safe braking distance from one another.

CAPTIONS: THE WAY AHEAD . . . battery-powered Aspire sports CD player
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